

PUBLIC

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UA 27/08 Fear of imminent execution

INDONESIA Achmad Suradji (m)

Achmad Suradji is at risk of imminent execution. He was sentenced to death on 27 April 1998 for the murder of 42 women and girls found buried in a field next to his house in the village of Semayang, North Sumatra province.

According to media reports, a prosecutor at the office of Indonesia's Attorney General confirmed plans to execute Achmad Suradji in February 2008, stating that "next week we are sending a team to monitor the execution". Achmad Suradji's appeal for clemency to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was rejected in December 2007. Amnesty International is calling for the execution to be halted and the death sentence commuted.

Although the details of the execution have not been announced, Achmad Suradji is currently being held in Tandjung Gustan prison, Medan city, in North Sumatra Province, where it is likely the execution will be carried out.

Achmad Suradji was a well-known and respected witch doctor often consulted by local women regarding matters of money, health and romance. He was arrested on 2 May 1997 when relatives of one girl who had visited him became concerned that she had not returned home. Police eventually uncovered the remains of 42 women and girls buried around Achmad Suradji's property. All were reportedly strangled by Achmad Suradji between 1986 and 1997.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Death sentences in Indonesia are carried out by firing squad. The person under sentence of death has the choice of standing or sitting and of using a blindfold or cover for their head. Firing squads consist of 12 people, six of whom are supplied with live ammunition and six whose guns are loaded with blanks. The squad fires from a distance of between five and 10 metres.

To Amnesty International's knowledge, at least 115 people are believed to be under sentence of death in Indonesia. 11 of these were convicted and sentenced to death in 2007. At least one person was executed in 2007: Ayub Bulubili (see UA/96/07, ASA 21/005/2007, 23 April 2007, and follow-up). His was the first execution recorded by Amnesty International in Indonesia since September 2006.

Amnesty International recognizes the need to address serious crime, including murder, but is convinced that the death penalty does not provide a solution. There is no clear evidence that the death penalty deters crime any more effectively than other forms of punishment. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unreservedly in all cases, and supports the global trend turning away from the use of the death penalty, powerfully expressed in the UN General Assembly's resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions on 18 December 2007. Today 135 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

In 2006, Indonesia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states that "every human being has the inherent right to life." However, the Indonesian authorities did not authorize ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Bahasa Indonesia, English or your own language:

- recognizing Indonesia's need to address serious crime, but asserting that there is no clear evidence that the death penalty is an effective deterrent;
- calling for the preparations for the execution of Achmad Suradji to be halted immediately and for his sentence to be commuted;
- calling on the Indonesian authorities to commute all death sentences in Indonesia, as they constitute the violation of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life;
- urging the authorities to release information on the number of prisoners currently under sentence of death in Indonesia, the date of sentencing, and the status of appeals against sentences; and release information on the procedures for informing prisoners and their families when their execution is imminent;
- calling on the Government of Indonesia to sign and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and commit themselves to working towards the abolition of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

President

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Istana Merdeka, Jakarta Pusat 10110, Indonesia

Fax: + 62 21 345 2685

+ 62 21 526 8726

Salutation: Dear President

Chief Attorney General

Mr. Hendarman Supandji, Jl. Sultan Hasanuddin No. 1, Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta, Indonesia

Fax: + 62 21 725 0213

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Governor of North Sumatra

Mr Rudolf Pardede, Jl. P. Negero No 30, Medan, Sumatra Utara, Indonesia

Salutation: Dear Governor

and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 March 2008.